

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Property Address:	1905-1917 14th Street, NW	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Greater U Street Historic District	X Consent Calendar
		X Concept Review
Meeting Date:	September 22, 2011	X Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	11-323	New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott	Demolition

Architect Eric Colbert, representing Level 2 Development, seeks on-going conceptual review for a seven-story residential and retail building at the southwest corner of 14th Street and Wallach Place in the U Street Historic District. When reviewed in June, the Board did not approve the concept, asking that the setbacks and architectural treatment of the top two floors be restudied, and that the building better relate to the small scale context of Wallace Place. The Board asked that the applicant work with the HPO to evaluate the setbacks that have been employed in similar projects approved by the HPRB along 14th Street.

Proposal

As recommended, the proposal has been revised to include more substantial setbacks from Wallach and for the upper floors. On the north, the fifth and sixth floors would be set back 15 feet from Wallach; on the rear, these floors would be set back 12 feet from the adjoining row house. The design has also been revised to reduce the visual impact of the seventh floor, with set backs of 10'4" and 5'10" on the north and south and canting in from 14th Street and the rear. The penthouse has been relocated to the middle of the building, with equal setbacks on all sides, to reduce its visibility.

The elevations have been further developed in an effort to make the building more contextual and residential in appearance. The composition is still defined by three projections along 14th Street, reduced from five floors to four and styled with brick piers and smaller-scaled industrial style windows. The primary mass of the building would be clad in a heavier masonry vocabulary with slightly larger-scaled windows. The seventh floor would be clad largely in glass with metal panels; this glass skin treatment would bifurcate the primary masonry mass coming down to the ground to demarcate the building entrance.

Evaluation and Recommendation

Both in massing and design, the compatibility of the project has been significantly improved. With slight reductions in the building mass and the use of different architectural vocabularies, the weight of the building is broken down into smaller scaled elements that will coexist much more compatibly with the surrounding smaller historic buildings.

The results of the Board's suggestion of studying the setbacks of other approved projects along 14th Street proved informative. While the particular solutions have varied and the resulting projects have been anything but uniform, the Board has been consistent in the general design principles that it has encouraged for new construction along the corridor. These have included: establishing a visual break somewhere between 55-65 feet on the 14th Street elevations to lower a building's apparent height; setting back and architecturally differentiating top floors to lessen their visual impact and height disparities; stepping down the mass of a building as it wraps around to a smaller-scaled

residential side street; using lower height projections to provide a transition element between smaller historic buildings and the larger new project; and breaking the scale of large new buildings with a variety of cladding treatments and materials. Like the other projects approved by the Board, the revised proposal has applied these principles to the particulars of the site and in a unique way, but similarly resulting in a compatible design.

The HPO recommends that the HPRB approve the revised conceptual design as consistent with the purposes of the preservation act and delegate final approval to staff. The applicant should continue to work with staff during design development, particularly in regard to the storefront design, development of window specifications, and detailing of the masonry and metal cladding.